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North Texas Daily

Serving the University of North Texas & Denton since 1916

News

University President Harrison Keller speaks with the *North Texas Daily* in the Hurley Administration Building on Nov. 4, 2025. **Photo by Aiden Gonzalez**

President gives State of the University address

By Hannah Everett
Managing Editor

University President Harrison Keller announced a new five-year strategic plan, half a dozen university initiatives and a $100 million capital campaign on student success during the State of the University address on Nov. 5.

Keller sat down with the *North Texas Daily* on Tuesday to discuss the strategic plan as prepared for delivery at the State of the University address.

The plan, Look North: UNT 2030, has three main themes or areas of focus: Develop, Discover and Drive.

"The way I think about it is, given who we are at UNT, is unleashing the power of human creativity for impact at scale," Keller said during the interview. "So around each of those three themes, there will be some things in the speech that I'll be announcing."

According to the plan provided by the university, the Develop phase focuses on developing the university community's "full potential" by creating integrated support for student success, modernizing curriculum, empowering faculty and staff and strengthening the university's culture. This portion of the plan, Keller said, is about understanding analytics and improving advising – academic and career advising.

Discover is focused on "driving new knowledge and insights," according to the plan, which would tap into the Texas University Fund.

TUF, created when voters passed Proposition 5 in 2023, is an endowment fund that the university can begin to benefit from after it spends $45 million on research.

Keller said the university would likely qualify for TUF later this year.

A priority, Keller said, under the Discover portion of Look North: UNT 2030, is increasing support for graduate students by offering health care to doctoral students.

"One of the persistent issues for us has been that when you look at the levels of support for our doctoral students on fellowship versus other institutions that we're competing with, we haven't provided health insurance," Keller said.

Keller said the university provided health insurance to this year's incoming doctoral class, but that the coverage was not extended for all doctoral students on fellowship because the university "didn't know where we were going to land on the eligibility for TUF."

Keller said the university will extend health insurance to all incoming doctoral students. He said doctoral students typically spend $3,000 a year, which is a "significant bite" out of the doctoral fellowship money.

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News

SNAP funding exhausted amid 35-day government shutdown

A volunteer stocks food items at the UNT Food Pantry on Oct. 31, 2025. **Photo by Maria Arellano**

By Mollie Banstetter
Staff Writer

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program funding has run out as of Nov. 1, due to the government shutdown, which has now lasted 35 days.

SNAP benefits are a federal initiative that helps lower-income individuals and households afford groceries. Around 3.5 million Texans rely on this assistance.

The United States Department of Agriculture administers the program and relies entirely on federal funding approved in the Farm Bill through congressional appropriations.

The government shutdown is due to Congress' inability to pass the funding bill, disrupting government services.

Through a court filing, USDA announced Nov. 3 that it would release about half of the normal SNAP funding for November. The move averted a total halt to benefits but left millions of families across the country with less support for necessities.

This includes roughly 460,000 recipients in the North Texas Food Bank's service area, said Jeff Smith, director of communications for the non-profit organization.

Smith said NTFB, which serves 12 counties, has been closely monitoring local demand. He said that with 750,000 people already considered food insecure in the North Texas region, a reduction in federal benefits could drive a 60 percent spike in need — a level Smith said no food bank could sustain long-term.

In preparation, Smith said the organization has ordered additional supplies, planned mobile distributions and remains in constant communication with its 500 partner pantries.

"We can manage a short-term disruption," Smith said. "But if the shutdown continues for a long period, it's going to be very difficult."

Smith said the food bank learned from the COVID-19 pandemic how to quickly shift and reshape its response to serve the community as needed.

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Arts & Life

Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studios hosts fifth annual Trans Pride Fest event

By Sophia Carbajal
Senior Arts & Life Writer

On the day after Halloween, solo performer June Parker, 22, knelt on stage next to an amp, playing ambient music through her bass guitar while her friend helped inject an estrogen shot into her thigh.

One of many performances, the fifth annual Trans Pride Fest took place at music venue Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studios last Saturday, Nov. 1. Parker performed an improvised set of electronic noise music under her stage name New Nonsense, the hormone shot being a way for her to be transparent about her identity, she said.

"It's on the spot, and it could be horrible, it could be really cool, but whatever it is, I just have to take that leap and do it," Parker said. "Taking shots up on stage is like 'This is who I'm trying to be.'"

Parker was one of more than 50 musicians who performed across three stages at Rubber Gloves, each with a different vibe. Attendees could thrash in a mosh pit in front of the outdoor stage, listen to a variety of genreless music in the main room or be engulfed in a wall of electronic sounds in the smallest of the three: the rubber room.

Local bands and musicians performed from 6 p.m. to approximately 12:30 a.m. Attendees could also talk with local organizations tabling at the event, such as the university's Young Democratic Socialists of America chapter and a student group called The Lavender League from Texas Woman's University.

Parker has attended several Trans Pride Fest events in previous years and performed at this year's fundraising concert on Oct. 4. For Parker, performing at Trans Pride Fest gives her a chance to express her identity and celebrate the love of transgender people through a medium she loves.

"It's a bit of a safe haven," Parker said. "Even just for 30 minutes, I can be up on stage and do whatever the f–k I want to do. It really helps in grounding everyone and keeping everyone sane in these insane times."

Dallas content creator Kayla Poyer, 25, served as the master of ceremonies at the event, introducing each band and performer on the three stages throughout the night. As a trans woman, Poyer said

Soloist June Parker takes her estrogen therapy shot while performing during Trans Pride Fest at Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studios on Nov. 1, 2025. **Photo by Katie Brackens**

she feels at home in Denton's large queer community, with music and performances like Trans Pride Fest being the perfect way for queer people to gather.

"Music and trans identities are very, very closely intertwined," Poyer said. "I think having a space every year where that is really highlighted and trans acts are on stage with their audience who love them and know them locally, I think it's really, really important, especially now."

Poyer said safe spaces for trans people are more important than ever amid anti-trans legislation passed this year. For example, Senate Bill 8, or more commonly known as the "bathroom bill," restricts transgender people to the use of bathrooms based on their assigned sex at birth in government-owned buildings, public schools and universities. Gov. Greg Abbott passed the bill on Aug. 18, and it will become law on Dec. 4.

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President Harrison Keller announces strategic plan, other initiatives in State of University address

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Drive is about driving impact at "massive scale" through partnerships that expand educational, cultural and economic opportunities across the "region, state and beyond."

Within the three phases is a recurring "enduring value" theme, which Keller described as value to students, employers, taxpayers and the nation. Keller said this value is fundamental to the plan and comes from the return on investment of degrees.

"Our strategy for the next five years is built on a singular mission: to create enduring value for the public good," according to the strategic plan.

Keller said on Tuesday he will announce "Look North," a $100 million capital campaign for student success. He said the campaign has started and was in the "quiet phase," and that the university aims to end it within the next 24 months.

"It's really intentionally sending the message, not just to our campus community, but beyond, about 'Here's who we are, here's what we stand for, here's where we're going,'" Keller said. "But it makes sense that out of the blocks, like our first capital campaign and a decade, is focused on students. It's focused on accelerating this broader vision for student success."

As Keller discussed in the Oct. 8 Faculty Senate meeting, the university will launch an initiative on civil discourse.

"We've got a responsibility to educate students as citizens, colleagues, adults to respectfully engage in dialogue, hear each other, where they can disagree," Keller said. "And so that's something I think is going to be very important, both on the curricular and the co-curricular side."

Keller said Tuesday that another important initiative is expanding the criteria for faculty promotion and tenure. Keller said the university will broaden its criteria for faculty promotion and tenure beyond the current scholarship requirements – publishing articles and conducting research – to include a criterion for teaching and innovation.

"We need to broaden the criteria, not to lower the bar," Keller said. "It's really to raise the bars, so yes, absolutely recognize excellence in scholarship, but we need to recognize excellence in innovations and teaching. We need to recognize excellence and that has an impact beyond the university."

Keller said he will give an update on the Texas Talent Accelerator, which launched on Sept. 4. Funded by the 89th Legislative Session, the accelerator focuses on collaboration between higher education institutions, employers and community partners to align academic programs with industry standards.

The plan says the university will transform online and physical learning environments with new technologies, a reality made possible due to funding from the legislature.

University President Harrison Keller spoke at the Murchison Performing Arts Center for the State of the University address on Nov. 5, 2025.
Photo by Aiden Gonzalez

"That funding will help us improve some of our infrastructure," Keller said. "It's going to help us address some issues around deferred maintenance, and renovate and better use some of our instructional spaces [...] On the digital side, let's just cut to the chase. Students are going to have to be comfortable working with AI."

Keller said the university is experimenting with tools powered by artificial intelligence and is training faculty to incorporate AI into teaching.

"Among the skills is that you're going to have to have to be able to be successful in your career, you're going to have to be comfortable working with and adapting to new technologies, especially technologies that are powered by AI," Keller said.

Denton County Friends of the Family breaks ground on new family justice center

By Lauren Pruett
Staff Writer

Content warning: The following article contains descriptions of experiences of domestic violence.

Individuals gathered at the home of the future Denton County Family Justice Center on Oct. 27, where Denton County Friends of the Family broke ground on phase one of its family justice center.

Located on 3050 N Bonnie Brae St., law enforcement and city officials, donors, DCFOF staff and volunteers and citizens from across Denton County were in attendance.

"The central sort of motivator in a Family Justice Center is deep collaboration between systems," said Donna Bloom, the executive program director of legal services and a Denton resident. "We're all elevating this need in our community and rowing in the same direction towards solutions."

Cassandra Berry, the outreach resource coordinator and overseer of the VOICES committee at DCFOF, said, when completed, the Family Justice Center will be a "one-stop service" where survivors will "have the whole nurturing environment in one location."

Reese Baez, Northwood University alumnus and owner of Triton General Contracting — the construction partner for the build — said construction will start in January 2026, with four phases. It will have emergency and transitional housing, legal services and childcare, as well as an animal shelter, a salon and law enforcement on site.

Fran Danis, DCFOF's first executive director and organization founder, said she is extremely proud of the work that DCFOF has done. She said much has changed since she and her team started the organization in 1980.

"They have taken this further than I ever had the vision for," Danis said. "I spent the week thinking about all of the difficulties we had getting established because it was a new project. Nobody wanted to talk about domestic violence back in the day."

Danis said she hoped they would be closed by now, wishing that domestic violence was not still a pervasive problem in society. However, she understands that the need for its services still exists.

"The issues remain the same," Danis said. "We still have abuse going on, but the community support is deeper and richer in terms of the kinds of things that they will do."

Danis said that when DCFOF started, the group had a lot of support, but not at the same level as it has now. They began with a small space that could accommodate only eight people, but the current shelter has about 50 beds.

"The goal, when it's fully utilized, should be 100 beds for victims and their children," Bloom said. "It'll ultimately double the space we have, which is critical, because the two shelters we have right now are always full. We turn people away every day from emergency housing."

Bloom said another key part of the work DCFOF does — and how they help survivors — is offender accountability. To create accountability, the organization has a battering intervention and prevention program.

"The Family Justice Center is really, at its heart, about helping victims, but you cannot help a victim without creating offender accountability and making sure that there are interventions," Bloom said. "[...] Recognizing the value of an intervention resource like that [and just] everybody in our community recognizing what it means to be someone who's using violence in a relationship and identifying it, calling it out right, creating accountability and making it unacceptable."

Emmitt Jackson, Argyle's police chief and member of DCFOF's board of directors, said he understands firsthand the impact domestic violence can have on a family. He explained that domestic violence is not just a family issue, but also a societal issue.

The Denton County Friends of the Family board of directors pose together before the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Family Justice Center on Oct. 27, 2025.
Photo by Marcella Anhuci

"I grew up in a household where I saw domestic violence," Jackson said. "I saw the effect it has on kids. I saw the effect it has on families."

Additionally, Jackson said people should be careful about the content they consume. He said the lines between strength and violence should never be blurred.

"[...] An individual that's willing to harm their intimate partner is much more likely to harm a stranger, to harm a law enforcement officer," Jackson said. "[Abusers] need to be taken very seriously."

Bloom said family justice centers consolidate resources for survivors when they decide to seek help. Everything is there in one place, from law enforcement to survivor advocates, building an "army of community."

"Listen and believe survivors," Jackson said. "If someone reaches out and says that someone has harmed them, stop with all the platitudes of, 'What did you do?' or 'What was going on?' and simply listen to the heart of the issue. Someone has physically harmed someone in a situation where that should never occur."

Jackson encourages the public to spread the word about DCFOF and to simply listen to the voices of survivors.

"Do any and everything you can to make that person feel believed, to feel heard and then to help them understand that there is hope and resources out there for them," Jackson said. "It is amazing how many people in this county don't even know that Friends of the Family exist, which means there are countless survivors who don't know that they can reach out."

If you are a survivor of domestic and/or sexual violence, know you are not alone, and there are resources to help you. If you are actively experiencing an emergency, please call 911. To reach Denton County Friends of the Family 24 Hour Crisis Hotline, please call: 940-382-7273. You can also contact the University Survivor Advocate at 940-565-2648.

United States' longest federal shutdown halts full SNAP benefits as North Texas braces for food insecurity surge

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The difference between this and the pandemic is that there was a lot of government support during the pandemic," Smith said. "So we got extra food, there were government programs that people were getting funds [from] and incentives to where they could purchase food. We don't have any of those kinds of things, this go around, and so everything is kind of left to the food banks to figure out how this works."

The university's campus food pantry at the Diamond Eagle Student Resource Center is also preparing for ripple effects. Isabelle Bishop, teaching fellow and graduate assistant at the DESRC, said the pantry expects to see more students seeking support but faces its own limitations.

"We don't have a database of SNAP recipients, so we have to wait for students to come to us," Bishop said. "We serve many international students who can't access SNAP, so our numbers might not fluctuate drastically. But domestic students who rely on both SNAP and the pantry will definitely feel the strain."

The UNT Food Pantry, which partners with the Tarrant Area Food Bank, hosts monthly mobile distributions open to both students and Denton residents. The upcoming mobile pantry will be located in Lot 20 this Friday, Nov. 7, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"We're expecting higher turnout at our mobile pantry this Friday," Bishop said. "Even with partial funding, the repercussions of this shutdown will be felt for a while."

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program has reduced impact amid lack of funding due to nation's longest government shutdown. **Photo by Maria Arellano**

Recognizing those concerns, the university's chapter of the Young Democratic Socialists of America partnered with the Ómanira Collective, a student advocacy group, and the Dallas Protesters group. The three groups worked together to organize a food drive from Nov. 10 to Dec. 8 in support of the local community.

Arden Larsen, media liaison and international studies major, said the drive comes at a critical time.

"This event came together quickly because we knew people would need help right away," Larsen said. "With the SNAP cuts, food insecurity is on everyone's mind. A lot of us grew up on SNAP or know people who rely on it, so we wanted to do something tangible."

Larsen said the group views the food drive not just as mutual aid but as a statement about student and community needs.

"UNT students live in a food desert," she said. "Groceries near campus are scarce, and the university hasn't done enough to address it. We're trying to fill in the gaps where the city and administration haven't."

Larsen stated that UNT YDSA's efforts are in response to rising housing costs and limited affordable food access that have deepened local hunger issues. She said the food drive also aims to collect data and stories from students about how SNAP and food insecurity affect their daily lives.

"We want to know how many students are actually impacted and make sure people's experiences are being heard," Larsen said.

Bishop said the situation highlights both the challenges and resilience of the university's community.

"We wish we could do more right away," Bishop said. "But we'll keep adapting and connecting students to every resource available."

The UNT YDSA food drive will have collection tables set up across campus, as well as a town hall event on Nov. 6 that addresses student food insecurity and the future of SNAP.

"Our government may only be partially funding SNAP," Larsen said. "But our community is fully showing up for each other."

Linda McNatt Animal Shelter marks 26 of 34 city improvement recommendations 'in progress,' next audit scheduled for fiscal year 2027

By Jordan Guilliams
Staff Writer

Following an audit conducted earlier this year, The Linda McNatt Animal Shelter received improvement recommendations. A follow-up audit, conducted in October, found the shelter only completed or found alternate solutions for five of the 34 recommendations.

The follow-up audit showed that only five of those recommendations had been implemented, two were "Not Due Yet," one had an "Alternate Solution," and the other 26 were labeled "In Progress."

Madison Rorschach, city auditor and Denton resident, said the "In Progress" distinction has a "broad spectrum," and can mean the recommendation has either been completed or has not started.

"[Denton] council was generally appreciative of the work that had been done [...]," Rorschach said. "It seemed like a lot of their concerns were relieved. [...] They felt good about the direction the shelter is going in."

The city found that the shelter used spreadsheet software to track annual inspection forms, established written guidance for employees on animal transport and implemented a plan to review and update the fee schedule. This includes commonly charged fees at the front desk, and although this was the first fee update in over 10 years, auditors could not observe it through the periodic review cycle.

Auditors provided an "Estimated Full-Time Shelter Staffing Needs" chart in the follow-up audit, listing how many full-time employees, daily staff and average minutes per animal were needed to provide minimum, advanced and enhanced care at the shelter.

According to the audit, the shelter is currently providing "adequate staffing for the advanced care level." The follow-up recommends adding more animal care technicians to ensure animal control officers have time to perform their field duties. Rorschach said the shelter added a new animal behaviorist position, which will help them move toward the advanced care level status.

"I think, ultimately, that's a policy decision from council on 'Do we want to spend the money,' because it costs more money to have more staffing," Rorschach said.

The follow-up audit also stated there were still inconsistencies in recorded logs of when sedation drugs are used, which do not directly euthanize an animal, but are used in the process.

"In the original audit, [...] they were basically non-existent," Rorschach said. "[...] When you reviewed video of euthanasias that occurred [...], we saw the sedation drug being administered on [the] surveillance footage. There wasn't always a record that that drug had been administered."

Rorschach said there is no law requiring the shelter to keep a log of when the sedation drug is used, keeping the shelter in compliance with its Drug Enforcement Administration license.

"We are purchasing the substance, so we should have a record of when it was used, [and] how much was used on this animal," Rorschach said. "Especially if you're administering something like that, it's good to know."

Nikki Sassenus, director of Animal Services and university alumna, said the shelter was still logging the use of the drug, but separately, instead of into their system, PetPoint. Sassenus also noted that the staff were out of view of the camera when weighing and scanning animals, and auditors were unable to confirm whether the weighing and scanning actually occurred.

"We have taken that recommendation and implemented, where now, staff is having to record use of the sedation drug in our system," Sassenus said.

DFW-based animal advocate Shannon Greer said she found herself disappointed with the results of the follow-up audit and the inconsistent sedation drug logs.

"At Denton, they're claiming 'Well, it's not a regulated drug, so it doesn't matter if it's out on a counter,'" Greer said. "Well, it does, because anyone could take it in the building that works there [...]. I said to myself, 'Why is it [that] if they're this far in, they haven't made progress on multiple issues in this amount of time?'"

Shelter kitten Wallace looks at his food at the Linda McNatt Animal Shelter on Oct. 24, 2025. **Photo by Thomas Trevino**

Greer said she believes the audit was prompted by scrutiny from the public, specifically following the death of Gunner, a dog who was euthanized by the shelter in September 2024. His owner, John Gilcrese, was told he could pick up the dog who had been brought in as a stray. Upon arrival, he was told Gunner had been put down.

Rorschach denied that the audit had anything to do with Gilcrese's situation, since the audit was approved before the incident. They said the timing just coincided.

Bite logs are mandated by the Texas Health and Safety Code in order to prevent the spread of rabies, and Sassenus said all bites or scratches are recorded electronically into their system.

Greer recently filed a public information request with the city, where she asked for copies of bite reports filed that occurred on city property or at off-site events. Additionally, Greer asked for an HR file for the new animal behaviorist and the standard of care she expects, a list of any employees who received a pay raise from Jan. 1, 2025, to now, and how much the pay raise was. The city quoted her 47 hours of labor at $15 an hour, making the total $705.

During a city council meeting Oct. 14, after the follow-up audit, Sassenus stated that some of the recommendations could not be worked on until they move to the new building. Greer said she was not satisfied with Sassenus's response.

Editor's note: This article has been shortened for print. Read more at ntdaily.com.

Trans Pride Fest acts as a 'safe haven,' gives performers a space to express their identity

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Poyer said legislation like the bathroom bill makes open and carefree spaces like Rubber Gloves a necessity.

"I think there's a lot of radical ideologies, radical politics here and I think it is good for the community to have a space to feel open in that," Poyer said.

Solo musician Eliza Foust, 22, performed at about 7 p.m. in the main room of Rubber Gloves. For Foust, music and performance are necessary processes for her to dissect religious traumas from her childhood and process her identity as a trans woman.

"As a kid, I was bullied and I was deeply afraid to be seen at all," Foust said. "I hated to give presentations. I don't know how, but I started to get good at them, and then I started to need them."

Now consistently producing indie rock, Foust uses her music to address current issues. Foust said she was inspired by how music has been used in the past to fight against harmful politics and that it should remain a meaningful mode of protest. The last song Foust played was titled "Lazarus," which she said is a story of defiance and resistance against the decaying political landscape of America.

Though the song is a protest, it ends with the lyrics "We are not afraid, we will overcome," a line that Foust wants to serve as a message of hope. Foust said she wants to help trans people feel seen, safe and inspired to be active voices in politics.

"Music is used as resistance all the time [and] it should be," Foust said. "We are going through a really tough time right now on Earth, and I think our music should be f–king spectacular."

Soloist Eliza Foust performs during the Trans Pride Fest at Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studios on Nov. 1, 2025. **Photo by Katie Brackens**

Things To Do:

REBLOG: Indie Sleaze Dance Party

When: Friday, Nov. 7 at 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Where: Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studios, 411 E. Sycamore St.
What: REBLOG is Texas' longest running indie sleaze dance party, DJs INTERNETMORGUE and Vanden will be on the decks from 10pm to 2am playing everything from classics by LCD Soundsystem and M.I.A. to current popular music like Charli XCX and Frost Children. Entry is $10, attendees must be 18 or older.

Pistons & Paint Car Show

When: Saturday, Nov. 8 at 8 a.m.
Where: North Texas Fairgrounds, 2217 N. Carroll Blvd.
What: The Pistons & Paint Car Show focuses on American Hot Rods and Customs from 1972 or earlier. The show allows spectators to make it all the way around the collection of cars & bikes, stop and take a picture, catch a few vendors and see live bands.

Hip To Be Square Art Show

When: Friday, Nov. 7 at 7 p.m.
Where: Bearded Monk 122 E. McKinney St.
What: Local artist Monique McIntyre will be curating a solo art show displaying a compilation of her works created since developing rheumatoid arthritis. On Nov. 7 from 7 to 11:45 p.m., originals and prints will be available for sale to help support her hip replacement abroad.

Scary Chairy Orchard presents the talents and creativity of the Denton artistic community in annual showcase

By Rebecca Hsu
Staff Writer

In the courtyard of City Hall stood a collection of chairs, each decorated with spooky, Halloween-inspired elements such as skeletons, twisted pumpkins and giant eyeballs.

Crafted by community members, local businesses and artists, the chairs formed the Scary Chairy Orchard, an exhibit on display through the duration of the city's 31 Days of Halloween celebration. All participating chairs were also entered in a contest, in which Mayor Gerard Hudspeth announced the winners on Oct. 29.

The Mayor's Choice Award went to an entry entitled "We're All Mad Here." The chair featured colorful flowers, some with faces in the center. It also has an "Alice in Wonderland" (1951) inspired look, decorated with a metal watch, a mini top hat in black-and-white checks and a purple-and-red flurry tail.

"I'm just so proud to share that with other communities and invite people to Denton to see how talented and how creative everyone is here," Hudspeth said.

Omar Siddiqi, administrative analyst for Denton Parks and Recreation and an award announcer for the event, said the Scary Chairy Orchard was initially inspired by the now-closed Chairy Orchard created by Denton residents Anne Pearson and Judy Smith.

According to KERA News, the two neighbors hand-picked a variety of chairs to fill the empty lot between their houses. The site became a staple Denton attraction, but was permanently closed in June 2023 due to an increase in vandalism.

Siddiqi said the Chairy Orchard had existed for about eight years, and that despite being around for less than a decade, the project felt deeply connected to what Denton is as an artistic and whimsical community.

"It felt like the project had been here forever, and then when it closed, people felt sort of a real sense of loss," Siddiqi said. "That sort of a beautifully whimsical part of Denton was going away. And so I think what we've captured with this project is sort of an homage to that original Chairy Orchard that certainly speaks to the kind of whimsy that project involved. I hope we've captured it well."

Siddiqi said the city received around 140 chairs this year. Parks and Recreation staff met to review the entries and selected four winners.

The Best Group/Business Chair went to "Derf the Dragon at Castle Moore" by the Fred Moore High School art club. The chair resembles a castle, with a cliff and red lava, featuring a dragon perched on top.

Jacqueline Davis, an electives and career in technical education teacher at Fred Moore High School, who led the students on the project, said the chair was a collaborative effort and that everyone had fun during the process.

"I had one of my students come up with the design idea," Davis said. "We collaborated. It was supposed to be just a cliff, and it morphed into the lava."

The Best Individual Chair went to "They're Watching You," created by Denton residents Nancy Heber and Joanie Ferrara, who are both avid knitters. The chair was decorated with more than 20 colorful yarn eyeballs arranged in a cauldron.

"We were trying to find an idea that was a little scary but also very kid-friendly, so everybody that came could enjoy it," Heber said. "And we were looking at things that we could actually knit or crochet, and we found a pattern for these monster eyeballs. And then we thought that they should be bubbling in a cauldron."

The Most Creative Chair went to "Granny's Rotten Root Cellar," created by the Heart of Denton Homesteading 4-H Club. Sydney Haass, club member and high school freshman, said a cellar closet inspired the chair one would see in a grandmother's house, where she keeps her cans and canned goods.

The chair features a three-tiered closet, filled with cans containing clay-made produce and other items. Each can has a unique name, such as Pickled Mice, Snake Oil and Grandpa's Sweet Tea.

"It took three days, but those three days were really fun," Haass said. "I loved seeing the vision come together, and I liked seeing how excited it made the club. Everybody contributed. It was really great."

Denton Parks and Recreation Director Gary Packan sits at the Scary Chairy Orchard finalist chair "Redrum" at Denton City Hall on Oct. 29, 2025. **Photo by Brendan McDonald**

For Haass and her family, participating in this exhibit and winning the awards also brings back memories.

Sydney Haass's mother, Stephanie Haass, who is also a club manager for Heart of Denton Homesteading 4-H Club, said she used to host book clubs and poetry tea times at the original Chairy Orchard when her kids were younger.

"We made lots of memories there," Stephanie Haass said. "This contest was a neat way to commemorate that."

Siddiqi said the chairs were returned to their contributors after the exhibit concluded at the end of October. However, he said that the city plans to archive some of the chairs each year as a record, as the Scary Chairy Orchard continues to be held in the future.

"I think our plan is sort of keep bringing new things to the city, and kind of the challenge is to do better every year," Siddiqi said. "And so we hope that the Scary Chairy Orchard will again be a real signal feature of that event next year."

Denton's archeology fair emphasizes 'studying people of the past'

By Rebecca Hsu
Staff Writer

During Denton's archeology fair, children dug into the sand, uncovering arrowheads and other artifacts to celebrate the science of archaeology.

In celebration of October as Texas Archeology Month, the Denton County Historical Commission hosted the "Denton Dig It! Archeology Fair" on Nov. 1 at Denton County Historical Park.

"Archeology as a community develops and grows like Denton is right now," said Melody Kohout, Denton County Historical Commission chair and Denton resident. "Archaeology becomes more and more important because of what is underneath the ground. There are unknown burials, abandoned wells [and] abandoned communities that we need to rediscover and get documented for historic purposes."

According to its website, the mission of the Denton County Historical Commission is to preserve, protect and promote the county's history. Kohout said the commission hopes to draw people's attention to history through family-friendly, community events like the archeology fair.

"We have tried to design the events so that there are things for children to do, but then there are things for people who are history buffs," Kohout said.

According to the National Park Service, archeology is the study of how "people lived in the past through the places and artifacts they left behind."

At the fair, Autumn McGaha, a lithic archeologist and staff member at SWCA Environmental Consultants, said it in simpler terms, saying it is about "people and the things they made."

Attendees browse artifact samples during the "Denton Dig It! Archeology Fair" at Denton County Historical Park on Nov. 1, 2025. **Photo by Dilip Devanda**

"Archeologists are anthropologists," McGaha said. "We study people. Archeologists are just studying people of the past."

McGaha added that there are several different subfields of archeology. For example, historical archeology focuses on periods of human history, such as wars. Lithic archeology examines stone tools. Bioarcheology studies human remains, while geoarcheology explores the geological and environmental context of archaeological sites.

At the fair, booths highlighted these different subfields, with some offering hands-on activities and exhibits for attendees to explore. Attendees also had the chance to browse historic artifacts, including old Texas Republic currency and a variety of homesteading tools.

McGaha participated in the fair with SWCA Environmental Consultants, a global environmental consulting firm, which hosted a flintknapping exhibit demonstrating the making of stone tools.

"Flintknapping is generally what we call experimental archaeology," McGaha said. "So we are experimenting with different toolkits and different knapping styles to understand how people were behaving in the past."

The fair also featured a paleontology booth presented by the Dallas Paleontological Society.

Unlike archeology, which focuses on humans and their tools, paleontology mainly examines plant and animal fossils, said Bob Williams, a Dallas Paleontological Society historian who has been with the club for about 15 years.

"I found a funny rock one day [and] wondered what it was," Williams said. "And you do that little while. Then the next thing you know, you're buying a book. You're trying to learn something about it. And then you join the club and find people who do the same thing, and it's just interesting to learn about some new stuff of any kind."

Williams said the club takes field trips about once a month to hunt for fossils across North Texas. Sometimes, members travel to other states as well. He added that most of the fossils found in North Texas are marine fossils.

Attendee Bonnie Wolf, who is also a parent of three, said her children enjoyed digging into the sand and seeing historical currencies at the fair. Wolf said she also used the activities as jumping-off points to discuss history with her children.

"While [my son] was chopping up the corn, we were able to kind of go through what this is in relation to he would have to do this every day — mashing up the corn for dinner [...]," Wolf said. "And I was explaining how mills grew over time with horses and things like that."

Kohout said she hopes children take away a bigger perspective from the fair.

"We want them to know that the world has been going on for a very long time," Kohout said. "Longer than us, longer than them, and it will continue to go on longer than any of us here. And if we can portray the message that what we pass on to others helps them know a little bit more about us, then we will have accomplished what we wanted to do."

&TEAM brought 'Back to Life' with ambitious but uneven Korean debut mini album

By Samantha Heath
Copyeditor

J-pop idol group &TEAM finally made their Korean debut with their first Korean mini-album, "Back to Life," on Oct. 28, selling over 1 million copies on release day.

Having released Korean-language versions of their songs since the group's debut in 2022 and being artists under the South Korean music label HYBE, this mini album marks their official launch into the Korean music scene. The project consists of six original Korean songs.

With a runtime of just over 18 minutes, the group continues to prove itself a global pop powerhouse, despite an album that, at times, feels unsure how to utilize the group's many talents.

Kicking off the album is the title track "Back to Life." This rock-infused hip-hop track hits hard from its first note, with explosive instrumentals and powerhouse vocals — a combination one only wishes were sustained throughout the rest of the album.

The second track, "Lunatic," starts with an electrifying guitar solo and a bold rockstar intro that unexpectedly shifts into a disjointed, unfocused sound. Leaning more into hip-hop, the track's funky beat and awkward rap verses do not quite land, resulting in a listening experience that falls flat.

Although being melodically unique with glimpses of cohesion in its sung verses, there is a blatant absence of substance that can only be slightly saved by the group's charismatic live performances of the number. For a song titled "Lunatic," it lacks the energy or intensity that would actually drive the average listener wild.

Illustration by Mekielle Vaughn

Taking a complete turn from the first couple of intense tracks, the third track, "Mismatch," leans into the casual R&B atmosphere that has shown up in previous songs, such as "Scent of you" (2022).

One of the few songs in the album produced by Soma Genda — the group's main producer — the song captures the familiarity long-time fans associate with the group. The clever switch-up of lyrics from "Girl, you never text me 'Goodnight'" in the first and second choruses to "Boy, I gotta text you 'Goodnight'" in the final chorus is also a fun touch.

The fourth track, "Rush," regresses, finding itself stumbling into similar pitfalls present in "Lunatic." Though it arguably has a more dynamic beat, the same chaotic production surfaces in the chorus, with "Rush" repeated over and over, backed by deep, grinding vocals that border on irritating. At the very least, the rap and singing segments blend more seamlessly, although they do still feel clunky at times.

Like a diamond in the rough, the fifth track, "Heartbreak Time Machine," is a breath of fresh air that feels in-tune with &TEAM's beautiful vocal ability. Soft rock melodies complement melancholic lyrics that convey overcoming past heartbreak and channeling those experiences into self-development.

The mention of all four seasons within the narrative — possibly referencing &TEAM's seasonal album series released last year — also lends to the bittersweet narrative. With lines like, "When I face you, in May spring rain. Between some summer days / The sweat that formed / Every single drop."

The sixth and final track, "Who am I," closes out the album in a more soulful approach, capturing the raw, relatable emotions of questioning one's identity in a relationship. The song, as beautiful as it is, also does an expert job at highlighting the members' ability to convey the song's sentiment through their performance. It does not overstay its welcome and provides a wonderful closure.

"Back to Life" is not an album that stains the legacy of &TEAM's iconic song catalog, but the watered-down Western influence that plagues many modern K-pop songs leaves a lot to be desired in the album's overall cohesion.

Though the standout tracks made the weaker moments easier to overlook, the album feels like it could have utilized &TEAM's talent and potential to their fullest, as previous albums have perfectly executed.

Samantha's rating: 3.5/5

Icon of the Week:

Zohran Mamdani

Credit **Dmitry Shein**

The *Daily*'s icon of the week is Zohran Mamdani, now the mayoral elect after his win by 50.4 percent of all New York City, New York, votes. He is also a hip-hop artist known as Mr. Cardamom.

Mamdani was born on Oct. 18, 1991, in Kampala, Uganda, to a filmmaker mother and father in academia.

At five, he moved to Cape Town, South Africa, where he spent the rest of his childhood. He later moved to Brunswick, Maine where he graduated with a degree in Africana Studies from Bowdoin College.

Mamdani entered New York City politics as a volunteer for Ali Najmi's campaign in the 2015 special election for the 23rd district of the City Council. In 2017, Mamdani joined the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America and worked for the campaign of New York City Council candidate Khader El-Yateem.

On Oct. 23, 2024, Mamdani announced his candidacy for mayor of New York City.

Visually beautiful 'Bugonia' presents the modern-day condition of the world in an imperfect, paranoid humanoid body

By Carson Kelly
Staff Writer

The world of "Bugonia" is controlled by aliens from the Andromeda galaxy who want to enslave the human race, or is it? Director Yorgos Lanthimos once again utilizes his distinct visual style to comment on the state of the world in the film "Bugonia," released on Oct. 31.

After spiraling downhill on an internet full of conspiracy theories and hoaxes, Teddy Gatz (Jesse Plemons), a disgruntled middle-aged man, manipulates and coerces his neurodivergent cousin, Don (Aiden Delbis), to help him kidnap the CEO of a giant pharmaceutical company, Michelle Fuller (Emma Stone).

Their goal is to get Fuller to confess to being an alien and take them to the mothership so they can free Earth from what they think is the enslavement of the planet by the Andromedan race.

Gatz and Fuller are like two rams smashing their heads together to vie for supremacy over the other. Gatz, in a desperate attempt to add meaning to an illness that has fallen upon his mother, tries every method he can to get Fuller to confess to being what he thinks she is.

All Gatz does is spew conspiracy theories. As the film moves along, he becomes borderline sympathetic, but unnerving with how deadset he is on the version of the truth he believes in.

"Bugonia" marks the fourth feature film Stone and Lanthimos have worked on together, and once again, they work wonders together. Stone can ride the steady line between absurdity and dead seriousness that Lanthimos has made his bread and butter.

Although Lanthimos makes the audience feel bad for Don as he is easily manipulated by his older cousin, which adds layers to Gatz's character and to Plemons' performance, the character often feels underused and undervalued.

Comedian and podcaster Stavros Halkias plays a cop named Casey — a necessary character to keep the story going. But Halkias, at times, gets dominated by his counterpart in Plemons.

Cinematographer Robbie Ryan again teamed up with Lanthimos to cultivate the beautiful, colorful world of "Bugonia." When the camera is not gliding along with a character, it is up close and personal with the actors.

Seeing every detail on Stone and Plemons' faces specifically adds to the film's dream-like reality. Stone looks like an alien in the basement's lighting, which adds to the film's funny absurdity.

The film can be small and isolating, then shift instantly back to the grand satire that Lanthimos has been great at, though not quite as well as in his previous films like "The Lobster" (2015) or "Poor Things" (2023).

The last act will make or break the film for the viewer. In a proper swing-for-the-fences moment, the movie's meaning does not get left to interpretation when the credits begin to roll. It works because the whole film builds to a climax that finally lets Lanthimos unleash his signature style.

While it may not be as effective or engaging as Lanthimos' other films, it still holds two performances from Stone and Plemons that make it worth the price of admission alone. It is an absurd and sometimes thrilling time that adds some interesting perspective on the state of the world.

Carson's rating: 3.5/5

Illustration by Thomas Trevino

North Texas women's basketball dominates Oklahoma Christian 106-36 in season opener

By Carson Kelly
Staff Writer

North Texas (1-0) beat Oklahoma Christian (0-1) 106-36 at The Super Pit Monday night, marking the third-highest margin of victory in program history.

Six Mean Green players scored in double figures, and the team held the Lady Eagles to single-digit points in three of the four quarters.

Despite the final score, the team had a rocky start in the first quarter of the season. Oklahoma Christian had open looks from beyond the arc, making three of them in the process.

On the glass, North Texas was outrebounded by five, allowing the Lady Eagles to grab 11 total. The quarter ended with the Mean Green holding a five-point lead at 18-13.

"If you saw the first quarter, you probably were like questioning what's going on with us," head coach Jason Burton said. "I think we just came out and it's the first time playing in The Super Pit, playing in front of this crowd and playing together with the lights on."

The second quarter was the polar opposite of the first, with North Texas scoring 38 points, tying a program record set against UNT Dallas on Nov. 6, 2023. On defense, the Mean Green held their opponent to just nine points.

"We tried to share the ball, which we did," senior guard Tiffany Hammond said. "We really shared the ball, and we let our defense fuel our offense."

Oklahoma Christians' turnovers steadily increased in the second quarter, with North Texas forcing 10. Defensively, the Mean Green started executing its game plan at a higher level after switching it up between quarters, applying more half-court pressure to limit the Lady Eagles.

Head coach Jason Burton celebrates after a 3-pointer against Oklahoma Christian at The Super Pit on Nov. 4, 2025.
Photo by Ismael Beltran

"It starts with our on-ball pressure," Burton said. "Picking up the ball, making it difficult for them in the front court and slowing them down and making it a little bit harder for them to get into their offense."

Hammond was the leading scorer in the game with 22 points. The transfer from Coppin State University in Baltimore, Maryland, shot 7 for 8 from the field and knocked down six 3-pointers.

While at Coppin State, Hammnd made multiple 3-pointers in over a dozen games, including a performance against a No. 6 Louisiana State University team in 2023, where she made seven. Hammond also added five assists to the box score in the same game.

"It ain't the first time for her. She can put the ball in the bucket," Burton said. "I'm excited for her, and I'm excited the North Texas fan base had a chance to see what she can do today."

Transfer senior forward Megan Nestor led the game in rebounds, grabbing 10 boards and contributing 17 points to the team's scoring effort. Nestor was named to the Lisa Leslie Center of the Year Award Preseason Top 20 Watchlist by the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame last week.

"10 is not really what I want, but I'll take that for now," Nestor said. "Rebounding is what I do, so I'm definitely going to be one of the best."

Nestor is one of two forward transfers Burton has previously said will be big for the team in the paint this upcoming season. The other is senior forward Tionna Lidge, who transferred to North Texas from Southern University and A&M College in Louisiana this past offseason. She finished her night with 16 points and five boards on Monday.

The second half continued the trend North Texas started in the second quarter. Oklahoma Christian was held to just 14 points in the half.

All the while, the Mean Green continued to increase their lead, scoring 106 total, which now sits at fifth all-time for points scored in a game for the program.

"It was fun. It definitely was fun," Nestor said. "Keeping them under 40 was a goal of ours, and getting over 100 was just an accomplishment."

The Mean Green's next three games will all be at home, with their next contest scheduled for Nov. 7 against Grambling State. The two programs have met only once, with the Mean Green winning 83-60 at home on Nov. 9, 2023.

After that, the team has two more home games against Nelson University and Abilene Christian before hitting the road to face longtime rival Southern Methodist University on Nov. 22.

"This team can definitely score the ball, and I'm excited about the offensive possibilities of this team," Burton said. "But when we do it on both ends, it's going to be special."

Editor's note: This article was originally published online.

Athlete of the Week:

Caleb Hawkins

Credit **Mean Green Sports**

Freshman running back Caleb Hawkins ran wild against the Navy Midshipmen on Nov. 1 with 33 carries for 197 rushing yards and four touchdowns. Hawkins' big day came on a day North Texas football defeated Navy 31-17 and spoiled the Midshipmen's previously undefeated team. His last four-touchdown day came against another academy team in Army on Sept. 20, where he ran for 99 yards on 13 carries. With both breakout performances and the rest of the season under his belt, Hawkins has recorded a team-leading 744 yards on 121 carries with 11 rushing touchdowns. His total rushing scores sit tied for third in the nation among all Football Bowl Subdivision players. This week Hawkins will not have a chance to add to his freshman campaign as North Texas football is on its bye week. But the following week, Hawkins and the Mean Green will return for a Nov. 15 outing against the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

At a Glance:

Volleyball

With four games left in their conference slate, Mean Green volleyball (19-6, 9-3 American Conference) has already clinched its spot in the American Conference Championship after defeating UTSA (11-12, 4-8 American) on Nov. 2. North Texas will reach the tournament for its first time under first-year head coach Dave Fleming with its next game being at Rice (15-8, 11-1 American) on Nov. 7 at 6 p.m. The Owls were the chosen favorite to win the American in the preseason, while the Mean Green were slated to finish tied for 11th.

Women's Basketball

The North Texas women's basketball team (1-0) will follow its 106-36 season opener against Oklahoma Christian (0-1) with another home game, this time versus Grambling State (0-1). The Tigers are coming off a 70-96 loss to Southern Methodist University (1-0) on Nov. 4.

Men's Basketball

Mean Green men's basketball (1-0) beat Division II New Mexico Highlands 88-54 on Nov. 3 to open their season. Their next game will be against DI Northwestern State (0-1), who are coming off a 98-68 loss to Texas A&M (1-0) on Nov. 3.

North Texas men's basketball opens season with 88-54 victory

By Haylie Stum
Senior Sports Writer

Since the program's inception in 1916, first-year North Texas head men's basketball coaches have held a 10-9 all-time record in their Denton debuts. The Mean Green's last two head coaches each won their first game at the helm.

New head coach Daniyal Robinson did not just extend that winning streak to three on Monday, Nov. 3, in an 88-54 victory over New Mexico Highlands University. The win was his first step towards continuing the legacy of the prominent Mean Green program, expectations he does not intend to just fulfill, but to elevate.

"He always tries to make us know that we ain't done anything, and we still got stuff to prove," sophomore guard Je'Shawn Stevenson said. "I think the intensity of knowing that we got work to do is still meat on the bone."

North Texas possesses one of six rosters in the country that returned zero scholarship or walk-on players from last year's teams. Regardless, it did not take the team long to see its first action in a Mean Green uniform, with an opening stand of 22 points exchanged between the teams in less than five minutes. The early back-and-forth made for a 12-10 score at the first media timeout.

A flurry of ball-handling issues and miscues from both teams defined the initial part of the game. Robinson chalked it up to speed in the plays.

"I felt like in the first half, they were maybe a step slow or a little hesitant," Robinson said. "We just [had to] throw that out of the window and say we are playing to our standard."

The inconsistency caused the momentum to shift between the two teams in the first 20 minutes. However, Stevenson was a steady force that anchored the team. Finishing with a team-leading 18 points and overall timely shots, Stevenson showed an ability to be an essential cog in the Mean Green machine all season.

"Je'Shawn's a special kid," Robinson said. "He's mature beyond his years [...] He's our hardest worker, the most diligent guy, so it's easy to root for him. He carried us in the first half."

With roughly six and a half minutes left in the first half, junior forward Derek Eide sank a 3-point shot to get the Cowboys within three points. Freshman guard Latavious Morris doubled down behind the arc for New Mexico Highlands nearly three and a half minutes later.

Morris' swish of the net handed the Cowboys their first and only lead of the game with a 27-25 score in their favor.

That is when freshman guard Curtis Stinson Jr. stepped up, seeing no better time to score his first collegiate points. With less than five minutes to go before halftime, the rookie made a big splash by scoring a lay-up to regain the lead for the Mean Green.

As the team transitioned onto defense following Stinton's score, senior forward Dylan Arnett motioned to the bench, mouthing, "Let's get it going."

His sentiment was received, as the Mean Green gradually evolved from that moment into the overtly physical team they have emphasized achieving since Robinson's arrival. The Cowboys turned the ball over four times for the rest of the half, while the Mean Green turned up the heat, making their last three attempts from the field before heading to the locker room.

Senior forward Josiah Shackleford goes for a layup against New Mexico Highlands at The Super Pit on Nov. 4, 2025.
Photo by Ismael Beltran

Robinson wanted to ensure the team's small surge of momentum could power North Texas to a win. To do that, he turned to junior guard David Terrell Jr.

"I challenged him personally at halftime, like, 'You're the head of the snake. You've got to put pressure on the ball and disrupt and trust everyone behind you [...],'" Robinson said. "That started the momentum. It all started with our ball pressure up top."

The Mean Green has historically taken pride in its defense, giving up an average of only 59.4 points per game from 2020-2025 among two different head coaches. The mark ranks second nationally, falling short only of one of the nation's premier college basketball programs, the University of Houston.

Robinson's entrance makes no exception. The signature of the team he coaches is a stingy defense. This defensive standard is something fans caught a glimpse of after the team adjusted on that side of the ball, something the players coined as "contagious" when it is on full display.

"We just had to settle in," redshirt senior guard Will McClendon said. "They did the short roll, [and] in the second half, we took that away. I think it changed the tide of the game."

Editor's note: This article has been shortened for print. Read more at ntdaily.com.

Restricting journalists' access to the Pentagon causes public distrust, harm and violates the First Amendment

By Lauren Pruett
Staff Writer

Journalists across a wide array of media outlets turned in their press passes to the Pentagon rather than accept press restrictions. These restrictions violate the First Amendment and are a blatant attack against journalists.

This decision from the Pentagon is both unprecedented within the journalism field and dangerous for the American people. Journalists are a vital part of a healthy democracy as they ensure the public remains adequately informed about the military and the Pentagon's actions.

Reporters should be allowed access to those in power in order to keep them accountable and the public well-informed. The Pentagon's restrictions not only abridge these rights, but they actively go against the public's right to information.

The new restrictions state that Pentagon approval is required before journalists report unclassified information about the headquarters, and that journalists will not be able to collect information that is not pre-approved for them to access. Access to certain Pentagon offices is restricted, and escorts are required if allowed.

At least 30 news organizations, including the Associated Press, Reuters, Newsmax and even Hegseth's former employer, Fox News, stood against the restrictions, declining to accept infringements on their reporting.

In a joint statement, five major news outlets, NBC News, ABC News, CNN, CBS News and Fox News wrote, "Today, we join virtually every other news organization in declining to agree to the Pentagon's new requirements, which would restrict journalists' ability to keep the nation and the world informed of important national security issues."

Illustration by Victoria Maldonado and Kaitlyn Kampschneider

Having a free, uncensored press was valuable to the Founding Fathers' vision of what they wanted their democracy to be, and they understood that without it, the democracy won through the American Revolution would not survive.

This is why the Pentagon's new restrictions are concerning. The Pentagon, along with the Trump administration, is trying to shirk the accountability they are held to by the press — accountability established by the Constitution.

Given the current presidential administration's negative perception of certain news outlets, this move by Hegseth and the Pentagon is not surprising. President Donald Trump is notorious for his anti-media stance. One can not help but see the similarities between his retaliation via lawsuits against media outlets that criticize him and the tyrannical censorship of the British Empire.

Since taking his position, Hegseth has also already severely restricted journalistic access to the Pentagon, stating in a post on X that "Pentagon access is a privilege, not a right." Hegseth and the chief Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said that these new rules are "commonsense" and are for the "protection of national security and the safety of all those who work at the Pentagon."

However, journalists have been present at the Pentagon since the 1940s. In the landmark case of the New York Times Company v. United States, the Supreme Court ruled that "the government cannot use 'national security' as an excuse to censor public interest journalism."

It is the job of the press to inform the public on the government and military's actions, no matter how inconvenient it is to an administration and its officials.

"The policy is without precedent and threatens core journalistic protections," the broadcast organizations' joint statement said. "We will continue to cover the U.S. military as each of our organizations has done for many decades, upholding the principles of a free and independent press."

In a statement made on Oct. 13 on the press restrictions at the Pentagon, the White House Correspondents' Association said, "Access inside the Pentagon has never been about convenience to reporters. The public has a right to know how the government is conducting the people's business."

The restrictions, implemented on Oct. 15, placed on the press will harm the public as the Trump administration and Pentagon strive to keep the American people in the dark. For instance, the American people deserve to know where the nearly $1 trillion spent on national defense goes for the world's third-largest military.

The new restrictions should be overturned, and the various news outlets should be able to report freely in the Pentagon without fear of retribution. Journalists should stand with the Pentagon correspondents who rejected the restrictions, and continue adequately covering the military, as many news organizations have vowed to do.

The public must stand with and support the press—the watchdogs of the people—as journalists continue to illuminate the darkness the Trump administration seeks to keep the people in.

Texas is failing its residents with a lack of preparation for natural disasters, action must be taken to protect the public

By Kyson Barber
Staff Writer

The current emergency infrastructure and response to natural disasters are not adequate to provide Texans with safety, relief or options as the state faces more and more natural disasters.

In 2021, millions of Texans were left without power during record-low temperatures because the state's electric grid relies on lost power. This freeze resulted in the deaths of 246 people.

Another natural disaster that proved these inadequacies was the Hill Country floods on July 4, 2025. In the early morning, devastating flooding occurred across the Hill Country, with inadequate warnings and awareness from local officials and the National Weather Service. This left people scrambling to escape the flooding, which displaced many and resulted in the deaths of 138 people.

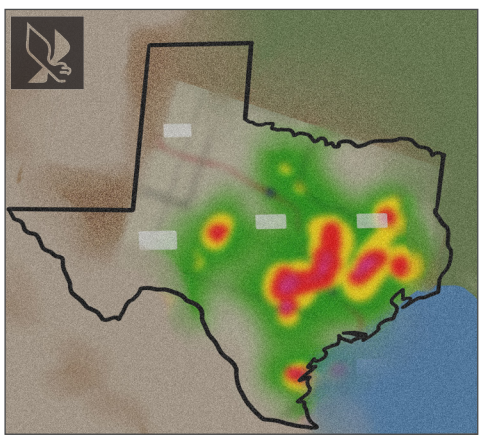

Illustration by Victoria Maldonado

The Hill Country flooding and the 2021 Texas winter storm power crisis have shown that the state struggles during natural disasters, leading to the harm and displacement of millions of Texans. Both of these natural disasters, which have cost billions in recovery, are indicative of the response problem that needs to be addressed in Texas.

During the freeze, Texas failed to prepare for extreme cold temperatures. The Texas power grid differs from most other states' grids, as it is independent and it has been mostly deregulated.

The power grid had not been upgraded, despite numerous prior instances of storms knocking it out, and was ultimately unable to withstand the weather. The lack of regulation of energy providers and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, along with isolation from neighboring states' power grids, left people vulnerable to extreme weather conditions.

Similar to the power grid failure, most of the Hill Country was flood-prone, and there were barely any warning systems and equipment to serve the area properly. Organizations warned that the state's lack of investment in emergency broadcast capabilities and public warning systems led to inadequate preparations and a failure to implement life-saving precautions.

After both of these emergencies, safety systems should have been put in place immediately, and relief funding should have been distributed. Instead, however, blame was passed around and lackluster legislation was put in place that does not sufficiently respond to the issue.

After the freeze, ERCOT faced heavy backlash for being in charge of the grid, leading to its board members resigning. Gov. Greg Abbott and Republican leaders also faced heavy backlash from Texas Democratic leaders, who said that ignoring the power grid for years and failing to handle the crisis fell on their shoulders. Many Republicans blamed ERCOT and environmental measures.

After the freeze, Abbott made calls to winterize the grid to prevent the catastrophic failure from happening again. However, the mandates are not fully followed as of now. An audit was conducted in August to determine whether natural gas production and delivery systems – which make up 41.8 percent of the state's power generation – met winterization standards and the findings showed a lack of precise regulation and action.

Senate Bill 3 of 2021 requires the Railroad Commission of Texas to identify important parts of the gas supply chain and ensure they are ready to operate in harsh weather. This commission was shown not to regulate individual gas companies to any specific standard, and it would pass inspection even with the cheapest of weatherization methods. This deregulation caused the mass outage in the first place and could be the reason it is hit again.

Small counties and districts that have fewer financial resources are the first in harm's way when it comes to these natural disasters. Smaller counties do not have the funds to put in place adequate systems without raising taxes, and therefore lack safety measures to save lives.

Regarding the flood, lawmakers failed to pass House Bill 13 before the disaster, which would have created a council to establish response plans and administer grant funding. This bill would have been a step in the right direction, creating a safer environment for people in disaster-prone areas. The bill was authored in response to the wildfires that occurred throughout the panhandle in 2024.

Although there was no preventive legislation, legislation was passed after the flooding to implement safety plans, camping grounds and some safety protocols. However, this legislation does not address the dire need to fund these safety plans across the state, as smaller counties struggle to deal with these disasters.

Texas leaders argue that the costs of preparation and emergency response measures are unnecessary or unwanted. However, the cost of disaster recovery is not only the more expensive preparation measures, but it also leads to more lives lost.

The cost of handling these crises is often too much for the state alone to handle, it usually has to bring in large amounts of external organizations for federal aid. Many states do not have the funds to recover from a natural disaster and, in many cases, rely on the federal government to give aid. However, recently, the federal government has attempted to shrink that assistance and make the states handle it, making preparation even more essential.

The Texas government can use its funds to protect vulnerable people in counties that lack the resources to develop viable solutions to these issues.

Texas leaders, both local and statewide, need to implement legislation, warning systems and emergency measures to save lives in disaster-prone areas. Texans' representatives need to act to save lives and prevent natural disasters from becoming tragedies.

The flood and the power outage are only two examples of the many disasters Texas has faced due to their failure to adequately prepare for natural disasters. In order for the state to avoid repeating the same mistakes of the past, Texas needs to invest in natural disaster prevention measures for the sake of its residents.